

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-05 SAB-02 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 EUR-12 /093 W

-----102616 281750Z /40

P R 281707Z OCT 77

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4302

INFO USUN NEW YORK 624

USCINCSO

PANCANAL

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PBOR, PN, SHUM

SUBJECT: PLEBISCITE OBSERVERS FAVORABLY IMPRESSED

REF: PANAMA 6650

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED: SUMMARY: A PLETHORA OF INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS DESCENDED ON PANAMA OVER PLEBISCITE WEEK-END, REPRESENTING THE U.N. SECRETARY GENERAL, U.S. AND LATIN AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES, AND FOREIGN NEWS MEDIA. THEY WERE FAVORABLY IMPRESSED BY THE IMPARTIALITY AND EFFICIENCY OF THE PLEBISCITE, AND BY THE GENERAL ENTHUSIASM OF THE PARTICIPATING CITIZENS. END SUMMARY. END UNCLASSIFIED.

1. BEGIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE. MR. ERIC SUY, THE CHIEF OF THE UN MISSION WHICH OBSERVED THE PLEBISCITE, TOLD THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR OCTOBER 26 THAT HE AND HIS PEOPLE WERE IMPRESSED WITH THE IMPARTIALITY AND EFFICIENCY OF THE PLEBISCITE. HE WAS HIGH IN HIS PRAISE OF THOSE WHO ORGANIZED IT AND SAID IT WAS "WORTHY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF SWITZERLAND."

2. SUY SAID THAT THE UN OBSERVERS FOUND A FAIR NUMBER OF "ANOMALIES" IN THE PROCESS, ALL MINOR. THE MOST FREQUENT, HE SAID, WERE THE EXISTENCE OF CAMPAIGN PROPAGANDA (BOTH PRO AND CON) IN THE VICINITY OF THE VOTING BOOTHS. BUT HE SAID THESE ANOMALIES WERE INVARIABLY CORRECTED

WHEN POINTED OUT AND WERE FAR OUTWEIGHED BY THE FAIRNESS AND ORDERLINESS OF THE PROCESS.

3. THE SEVEN-PERSON MISSION WAS DIVIDED INTO THREE TEAMS FOR ELECTION DAY AND EVENING. ONE (INCLUDING SUY) VISITED VOTING STATIONS IN PANAMA CITY AND PROVINCE, DARIEN, COLON AND THE SAN BLAS ISLANDS. A SECOND COVERED CHIRIQUI AND BOCAS DEL TORO. A THIRD VISITED STATIONS IN THE CENTRAL PROVINCES OF VERAGUAS, LOS SANTOS, HERRERA AND COCLE. THE PANAMANIAN GOVERNMENT SUPPLIED EACH TEAM WITH A SMALL AIRCRAFT AND MOTOR TRANSPORT AS NEEDED. TYPICALLY, A TEAM WOULD VISIT A NUMBER OF POLLING PLACES IN AN URBAN AREA, DRIVE TO ANOTHER LARGE TOWN, STOPPING AT STATIONS ALONG THE WAY, AND THEN FLY TO ANOTHER LARGE TOWN. THIS PROCESS WENT INTO THE EARLY MORNING MONDAY AS THE TEAMS OBSERVED THE COUNTING PROCESS. SUY SAID THAT THE COUNTING WAS PUBLIC, SOMETIMES IN THE PRESENCE OF A LARGE CROWD OF CITIZENS. (HE FOUND THE INTEREST AND ENTHUSIASM OF THE CITIZENRY RATHER REMARKABLE, HE SAID.) HE SAID HIS TEAMS WERE GIVEN ABSOLUTE FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT.

4. SUY SAID THAT THE UN WOULD NOT RELEASE HIS REPORT UNLESS ASKED TO DO SO BY PANAMA. IF PANAMA SHOULD REQUEST RELEASE, HE SAID, HE WOULD RECOMMEND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO SECRETARY GENERAL WALDHEIM THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT BE CONSULTED BEFOREHAND.

5. SUY DID NOT SEEK TO PRUBLICIZE HIS MISSION. HE SPOKE BRIEFLY WITH THE PRESS, PRASING PANAMA FOR ITS EXPERIMENT IN DEMOCRACY.

6. RECOMMENDATION: THAT WE RAISE WITH THE PANAMANIAN GOVERNMENT THE POSSIBLITY OF RELEASING THE UN REPORT. END LIMITED OFFICIAL USE. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED.

7. PRESIDENTS OF 20 U.S. AND LATIN AMERICAN UNIVER-SITIES, TOGETHER WITH OTHER UNIVERSITY REPRESENTATIVES FOR TOTAL OF SOME 40 PEOPLE, ALSO RESPONDED TO GENERAL TORRIJOS' INVITATION TO OBSERVE THE PLEBISCITE. LIKE THE U.N. MISSION, THEY WERE DIVIDED INTO GROUPS (ABOUT 6 PER GROUP) AND PROVIDED TRANSPORTATION TO VISIT POLLING PLACES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. THREE U.S. UNIVERSITIES WERE REPRESENTED:

NOTRE DAME, GEORGETOWN, AND THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI. IN SPEAKING WITH AN EMBASSY OFFICER, THE CHANCELLOR

OF THE LATTER SAID HE WAS SATISFIED THE PLEBISCITE  
WAS HONESTLY CONDUCTED AND THE VOTERS ABLE TO MAKE  
A FREE CHOICE. HE SAID HE OBJECTED TO TWO MINOR INCIDENTS  
OF IRREGULARITIES AT VOTING PLACES WHICH WERE CORRECTED  
UPON HIS REQUEST.

8. SOME 25-30 MEMBERS OF THE FOURTH ESTATE FROM THE  
U.S., LATIN AMERICA AND EUROPE WERE ON HAND FOR THE  
PLEBISCITE. ALMOST ALL MAJOR U.S. NEWSPAPERS AND  
MAGAZINES WERE REPRESENTED. ALTHOUGH THE EMBASSY  
WAS NOT IN TOUCH WITH ALL OF THEM, WE HAVE NOT HEARD  
ANY CRITICISM OF THE EVENT FROM THEIR RANKS. END  
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## Message Attributes

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